



Best Practices in DEQ Community Involvement

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DEQ Community Involvement

LISTENING. LEARNING. COLLABORATING.

Protecting Virginia's environment together.

Section 1: Community involvement themes

Collaboration and relationship building

Central Office

- The Water Quality Division brought **volunteer water quality monitors** together and listened to concerns regarding the use of data generated by citizens. Many volunteers did not want their data to be used for regulatory purposes. In response to citizen monitors' concerns, water quality staff developed five alternative choices for data use. Volunteer organizations were asked to complete and sign the data use selection forms, and were given opportunity to change their selection as time goes on.

This is an example of collaborating, problem solving, listening, using alternative dispute resolution and offering choices in problem solving.

- The Virginia Office of Environmental Education staff painted an **environmental mural** with Boy Scouts, Bank of America and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The workshop was held in the Children's Garden at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.



This is an example of collaboration, good location to get target audience, artist media, a publicly accessible location, and public information and visibility for DEQ.

- The DEQ Waste Division established the **Solid Waste Citizen's Advisory Group** as a recommendation from the Community Involvement Task Force to hear concerns from citizens living near landfills and provide information to citizens interested in solid waste issues. The group first met in 2004 and has held several meetings since then. DEQ has presented information on the regulatory, permit, and inspection processes, highlighting the opportunities for public involvement. Topics for the most recent meeting included landfill permit denial process, landfill need, landfill capacity, the planning and recycling regulations and activities, and the proposed Cumberland landfill. Representatives from DEQ's Waste Division and recycling group gave presentations on the topics, answered questions, and then led open discussions. Attendees included Campaign Virginia, the Sierra Club, and interested citizens.

This is an example of collaborating, problem solving, listening, and bringing others to the table.

- The DEQ Waste Division collaborated with EPA Region III to conduct two **training** sessions in May 2007 for the regulated community on **Toxic Release Inventory** reporting. The training provided facilities an overview of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act or EPCRA §313, the uses of the data generated, and a detailed discussion of reporting requirements. Many technical representatives of facilities presented their concerns and emphasized the importance of the documentation required for chemical releases and threshold determination, and whether they qualified for reporting exemptions or the more recent Alternate Threshold Reporting Rule.

This is an example of collaborating, problem solving, listening, and bringing others to the table.

- The DEQ Office of Solid Waste oversees the new **mercury switch** program, which is a program to remove mercury switches from end-of-life motor vehicles. This program was developed with stakeholder involvement, and, as it affects vehicles, has cross-agency involvement. DEQ works regularly with the Department of Motor Vehicles staff on issues concerning this program. Additionally, DEQ has engaged the Virginia Automobile Recyclers Association in order to provide outreach to the regulated community of automotive demolishers regarding the newly adopted regulations for this program. This outreach effort has included DEQ staff presentations at the association's annual conference, information availability through a user-friendly page on the DEQ website, and, compliance assistance visits. Additionally, as it was determined that some of the demolishers did not have access to computers, a mass mailing campaign containing a variety of information, including a letter notifying them of the new mercury switch program and additional information that the demolishers would need to know to comply with the regulations, was accomplished this fall. DEQ staff also has maintained contact with the stakeholder who developed this program and has met the group to provide information on the program status.

This is an example of collaboration and relationship building and targeting, and considering the audience.

- At Superfund sites, which are location where cleanups are conducted with oversight by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, DEQ participates in public meetings to help explain the cleanup process and answer citizens' questions. The **Hidden Lane landfill** site in Loudoun County is the most recent example at which DEQ personnel collaborated with EPA and provided the community the opportunity to ask questions and hear from state and federal experts on what is being done to secure the site and protect their long-term health and safety.
- In Albemarle County petroleum contamination from leaking underground storage tanks has impacted nine residential drinking water wells and the contamination has the potential to impact an elementary school. Through discussions with Albemarle County and meetings with impacted citizens, a consensus was reached on the development of the **Red Hill community water system** as the long-term solution to the petroleum contamination. Funding for this project is through the Virginia Petroleum Storage Tank Fund. DEQ has provided carbon filtration units on all impacted wells as an interim solution and continues ground water cleanup at the site.
- DEQ in cooperation with the Virginia Office of Fire Programs, the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management developed the **Environmental Crimes and Safety Awareness training** program to offer outreach to local first responders. The program is designed to familiarize attendees with the DEQ Pollution Response Program, Virginia Department of Emergency Management's Technological Hazards Division, responses to motor vehicle fuel spills, the use of multipurpose gas meters and dealing with abandoned materials, clandestine drug labs and environmental crimes. This class aids first responders in understanding DEQ's role and how they should properly handle spills. The class will become a regular offering through the Office of Fire Programs training catalog.

Northern Virginia

- The Northern Virginia Regional Office collaborated with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to sponsor an open community meeting about **construction waste and runoff**, targeted at homeowners associations.

This is an example of collaborating and bringing others to the table.

Piedmont

- The Piedmont Regional Office collaborated with the Sierra Club to reach local workers and residents concerned about **perfluorooctanoic discharge** into the James River at a Chesterfield plant site. DEQ staff addressed the concerns of union representatives, workers, local residents and environmental groups. As a result, DEQ and EPA are working with the Virginia Department of Health and the

Department of Labor and Industry to minimize risk exposure.

This is an example of working with a conservation group, addressing concerns of a target audience, collaborating with other agencies, involving a union early and taking advantage of collaborative problem solving.

South Central

- The South Central Regional Office staff organized and facilitated the strategic planning process for the **Greater Lynchburg Educational Network** with 25 agency and civic groups represented. This forum group worked on needs identification and framing environmental issues. They then organized by task forces to address the identified needs.

This is an example of collaborating with a good model of needs-based organization, identification and participatory processes, forming committees to address needs separately, illustrating the small group process, bringing stakeholders together and working with key leaders.

Southwest

- The Southwest Regional Office staff collaborated with the **Mount Rogers Planning District Commission** and VDH on a comprehensive sewer study with localities and utilities.

This is an example of collaborating on needs assessment and involving local and regional officials early in the process.

Tidewater

- The Tidewater Regional Office staff collaborated with a **county Board of Supervisors** to sponsor a meeting about a wastewater treatment system and nutrient regulations. As a result, concerns and fears of the board and the community were alleviated to the extent that DEQ could move ahead with the permit.

This is an example of collaborating with local officials, engaging stakeholders early in the process and addressing concerns of citizens.

- TRO staff collaborated with the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and Wetlands Watch to sponsor a community meeting on wetlands permitting. Citizens wanted to know how to become involved in the permit process. Panelists spoke about the land use planning process and illustrated points within the process to become most effectively involved.

This is an example of collaborating and working with a task force member environmental group on a focused topic that resulted in specific recommendations for citizen involvement in the permitting process, and promoting and emphasizing early engagement at the local and regional levels.

- TRO staff convened a panel for the **Back Bay Symposium** and participants learned about fecal coliform issues. Water quality is high on the list of community concerns and this discussion was covered by local media. DEQ staff members were interviewed for television news.

This is an example of collaborating, addressing community concerns, and using lay language and public relations to highlight an issue and DEQ.

Valley

- The Valley Regional Office staff collaborated with Shenandoah University, Master Gardeners, the local Native Plant Society, Girl Scouts and Forest Stewards to sponsor a tree planting day with 80 Winchester

residents. The shared goal of the total maximum daily load (TMDL, water quality improvement) staff and community groups was to improve the water quality of **Town Run**. This effort was part of the local cleanup plan recommending 16 miles of riparian buffers to address excess bacteria and sediment.

This is an example of collaborating, demonstrating best stewardship practices, meeting the community where the needs are, working toward shared goals, and tapping into university resources.



- VRO staff opened communication with the **Virginia Department of Health** on tank program issues related to drinking water contamination. DEQ coordinated a discussion with 15 county VDH offices throughout the region to clarify agency responsibilities under two recent pieces of legislation. The discussions led to collaboration with VDH colleagues on other issues.

This is an example of collaborating, building relationships, and clarifying DEQ responsibilities.

- VRO staff collaborated with the Department of Conservation & Recreation to sponsor the **TMDL Implementation Workshop** at James Madison University. The panel presentation for more than 100 participants included nine presentations on a variety of topics, including citizen monitoring, comprehensive and watershed based planning, and agricultural best management practices. Participants were asked to examine their own connections to their streams and rivers, and share their stories and experiences.

This is an example of collaborating with DCR, using the participatory process, involving diverse audiences and multiple topics, and using phone call reminders to improve attendance.

- VRO staff collaborated with Shenandoah County officials, wastewater treatment plant operators and sludge dewatering equipment vendors in sponsoring a meeting to address **sludge disposal options**. The implications of the regulatory process and public perception on the feasibility of land applying sludge were discussed extensively during the meeting.

This is an example of collaborating, building relationships and clarifying DEQ responsibilities.

- VRO staff made a presentation to the **Kiwanis Club** of Harrisonburg regarding the responsibilities of DEQ, with emphasis on **water permitting** and the effects of environmental regulation on the city of Harrisonburg.

This is an example of building relationships and clarifying DEQ responsibilities.

CASE STUDY

A VRO staff member was invited to participate on the **Virginia Poultry Disease Task Force** based on his expertise in poultry carcass disposal using in-house composting. Avian flu has killed many birds in the Valley and environmental impacts of disposal need to be considered. Working with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Cargill and Cooperative Extension, DEQ developed environmentally sound disposal methods. They were invited to educate other states on the Virginia experience and learn about composting innovations.

This is an example of collaborating, participating with professional researchers, adding to the body of knowledge on poultry carcass composting, sharing ground truth and innovations with interested stakeholders and collaborative problem solving.

West Central

CASE STUDY

The West Central Regional Office staff collaborated with the **Smith Mountain Lake Association**, American Electric Power, Army Corps of Engineers, DCR, Western Virginia Water Authority and citizen groups to sponsor a facilitated open house discussion on **watershed issues** including PCBs, erosion and sediment control, petroleum storage tanks, trash and debris in lakes and rivers. More than 100 participated in the lively discussion. DEQ staff agreed to convene a follow-up meeting at their fall open house about soil erosion and sedimentation concerns raised. Written invitations were sent to stakeholders including local decision makers, building inspectors and board members with phone call reminders two days before the meeting. Attendance was high, and almost all invitees attended. The meeting was held at a central and accessible location, the new Moneta Library. Many solutions were discussed. One locality explained that they had installed a wood chipper in a designated location on the local landfill site to address construction debris issues. Another locality shared the idea of asking developers how they intended to dispose of construction waste in the local construction permitting process. Participants also addressed the issue of open burning, which is not within DEQ authority. As a result, DEQ communicated with the localities and urged them to review and adopt open burning ordinances to promote air and water quality.

This is an example of people sharing good solutions with each other if we bring them to the table together, stakeholder identification, phone call reminders, facilitation, collaboration, referral to other agencies, clear communication, a meeting with a defined purpose, timely agency response and follow up.

Office partnerships

Southwest/Central

- The Southwest Regional Office, Virginia Office of Environmental Education and Virginia Naturally collaborated with **Upper Tennessee River Roundtable** and **Assign-a-Highway** program to host training on litter prevention and solid waste management for litter officers, teachers and recycling program managers from nine counties. Topics included recycling, composting and biodegradable materials.

This is an example of collaborating, providing training for stakeholders and clarifying DEQ responsibilities.

Tidewater/Central

- TRO, the central office Pollution Prevention group and waste staff members collaborated with the environmental group **Wetlands Watch** to provide accurate background information for a recycling rate article in a newspaper focusing on the importance of early intervention on wetlands by planning commissions.

This is an example of collaborating, using written communication in media, gathering facts and data, calling attention to an issue, and offering solutions to problems identified.

- TRO collaborated with the **Coastal Zone Management Program** to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan for one county on the Eastern Shore. Representatives from the county, community and agencies divided into work groups to cover water issues, including control of residential flooding, alternative septic systems, water quality improvement measures (TMDL) included in watershed planning strategies and protecting aquaculture. The plan was presented to county officials.

This is an example of collaborating, speaking truth to power through appropriate involvement in the decision making process, bringing people together, using work groups, including technical appropriate strategies in the comprehensive plan, engaging key leaders early in the process and getting DEQ programs included at the planning stages.

Valley/Central

- VRO and the central office Air Mobile Source staff collaborated with the **James Madison University ShenAir** program to host a Clean Air Champions program for high school and university students. Air staff brought a mobile source emissions detection van and several hundred cars ran through the tail pipe air quality test. Staff helped students and teachers understand the connection between tire pressure, engine maintenance and the associated impact on air and water quality in the Valley. Students took tire pressure measurements on a vehicle loaned by a local car dealer.

This is an example of collaborating with university partners and using an informational program on driver behavior, a hands-on activity for participants and curriculum for teachers; going out to stakeholders; and explaining technical concepts in lay language.

Community cleanup efforts

South Central

- SCRO staff volunteered to adopt a 2.8-mile segment of stream and helped to remove a half ton of trash and tires from **Blackwater Creek**. This creek is a large urban stream bordered by hiking trails, bike paths and a nature preserve.

This is an example of using a cleanup activity to link environmental quality to economic development and tourism.



Tidewater

- TRO staff adopted a two-mile stretch of road leading to a DEQ regional office, which borders on two lakes and a tributary of the **Elizabeth River**. They sponsored 15 cleanup efforts over the last five years and collected 3,435 pounds of trash, limiting the amount of litter and debris entering area surface water and wetlands.

This is an example of showing long-term commitment to a project.

Valley

- VRO participated in an **Adopt-A-Stream** river cleanup and paddled 10 canoes down river to gather trash from the **North River**. The collection included 30 tires, 199 bags of trash, 17 steel drums, 300 gallon steel tanks, water heaters bicycles, auto parts, pipes pallets, bed springs, sofas, chairs, microwave ovens, TVs, blankets, rugs metal roofing and iron pipes, refrigerators and even two kitchen sinks.

This is an example of a cleanup effort to improve



the community.

- VRO staff adopted a four-mile segment of the **North River** and conducted a cleanup, gathering 32 bags of trash totaling 2,000 pounds and including tires, a safe, a boat, a TV and many golf balls, steel rods and pipes.

This is an example of a cleanup effort to improve the community.

- VRO participates in **Adopt-a-Highway** roadside cleanup twice each year.

This is an example of a cleanup effort to improve the community.

West Central

- In honor of World Water Monitoring Day (October 18), WCRO staff joined the Upper Roanoke River Roundtable to sponsor a **Fall Waterways Cleanup**. Other organizations joining were the Roanoke Valley Natural Foods Cooperative, Clean Valley Council, Save Our Streams, Virginia Tech, Tom's of Maine and local governments. More than 350 volunteers participated. This collaborative event garnered front page news coverage.

This is an example of how a cleanup effort can show collaboration with businesses and volunteer groups, and gain positive publicity.

Piedmont

- PRO staff adopted a section of a nearby road through the **Adopt-a-Highway** program and conducts four cleanups each year. By being highly visible while cleaning up the roadside, volunteers can make motorists think before carelessly discarding litter.

This is an example of a cleanup effort to improve the community.

Use of lay language

Air monitoring

CASE STUDY

Air monitoring staff hosted an outdoor open house in **Hopewell** to explain the monitoring equipment recently placed in a field near a residential area. Staff offered tours of the mobile trailer and had an exhibit featuring **air monitoring** fact sheets. Residents were treated to hot beverages and snacks. As a result, neighbors promised to keep an eye on the site and the equipment, and report any irregularities to DEQ staff immediately. The volunteer site monitors included young folks on bicycles and an elderly handicapped woman who spends time watching out her window.

This is an example of going out to the community, explaining technical processes and equipment in lay language, recruiting citizens to help with equipment security, respect for community, and serving appropriate refreshments.

Central Office

- In response to citizen questions the Office of Financial Assurance, Office of Solid Waste, and Public Affairs Office developed a fact sheet outlining in layman's terms the regulatory requirements for obtaining a **permit for a solid waste landfill** and the opportunities for public participation during the process. The office also developed a fact sheet specific to the proposed landfill in Cumberland County.

This is an example of using clear instructions, lay language, role clarification, and the participatory process (including those affected in the decision); meeting the needs of DEQ staff; and establishing boundaries.

- In response to concerns of staff and previous technical advisory members, Regulatory Affairs developed **guidelines for technical advisory committee participation** that clarified roles and responsibilities of members and included facilitator and technical advisors. A group of DEQ staff provided input and explained what they needed from committee members and the process.

This is an example of explaining regulatory and technical processes in lay language and the participatory process of citizens in the permitting process.

Northern Virginia

- NVRO staff met six times with local officials, planners and the public about **ozone redesignation** for the Fredericksburg area.

This is an example of participating in the decision making process, sharing agency expertise with decision makers appropriately, and providing technical information in lay language.

- NVRO staff met with all **Farm Bureau** groups in the region to discuss the TMDL process and address concerns of the agricultural community.

This is an example of working with the target audience, using lay language, bringing stakeholders together, providing information, listening, and involving key leaders.

Piedmont

- PRO staff participated in the Virginia **Science Museum Lunch Break Science Program** and explained the TMDL process to participants.

This is an example of going out to where the stakeholders are, collaborating, and using lay language to explain technical terms.

Valley

- VRO staff organized a panel discussion on air quality at **Luray Elementary School**, a central and convenient location. The clear and catchy title was “Why Can’t Johnny Breathe?” which brought many people out to the session.

This is an example of using lay language, involving the community early in air quality issues, and relating technical information and research to citizens’ lives.

West Central

- The WCRO **Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations** permitting group held an environmental stewardship forum on stream water quality for farmers and agricultural producers.

This is an example of reaching the targeted audience, bringing stakeholders together, going out where they are, using lay language, collaborating with agriculture groups, and providing opportunity for citizen input.

Agency responsiveness

Central Office

- Water Supply Planning convened a **“Data Management” workshop** for water and sewer utilities and planning district commission staff in response to localities’ requests to understand sources and uses of available data for inclusion in their regional water supply plans.

This is an example of responding to expressed needs, bringing a group together with similar needs, addressing local officials in a timely manner, using a participatory workshop and facilitation, building facilitation skills among staff through co-facilitation, and clarifying expectations.

- The DEQ Waste Division along with regional offices conducted three training sessions for the regulated community on **solid waste information assessment reporting**. The training was held in November 2007 at Woodbridge, Glen Allen and Roanoke. This effort brought together DEQ staff and industry to understand the issues of solid waste reporting and the use of the data generated. These sessions led to the recommendation that the reporting solid waste information and assessment form be modified for simplicity and to ensure that all activity is captured in order to accurately reflect the amount of solid waste disposed and managed in the Commonwealth.

This is an example of agency responsiveness and keeping the regulated community and public informed.

Northern Virginia

- NVRO collaborated with the **county health department** to address ground water contamination near a closed landfill. Staff put rapid response plans into action and testing showed contamination in 26 wells. This coordinated effort led to additional local action and understanding of the contamination issues.

This is an example of rapidly responding to community concerns, working with the health department, and collaborative problem solving with local leaders.

- NVRO organized a **rapid response task force** to quickly address citizen concerns.

This illustrates agency responsiveness and shows how involving citizens early and preparing staff to deal with community issues can help with alternative dispute resolution and conflict management.

South Central

- An SCRO community meeting was co-sponsored with VDH in **Clover** about a mobile home park. The community had concerns about sewage overflows and poor sewage system maintenance. Local officials were present to hear the concerns. DEQ incorporated citizen concerns into the permit process and referred appropriate issues to localities.

This is an example of responding to community concerns, active listening, providing opportunity for input, bringing decision makers to the table with stakeholders, and incorporating citizen concerns into the permit process.

- SCRO staff heard citizen complaints about an **old train car** in the **James River**. After 20 years of unsuccessful community efforts, DEQ staff organized a group to drag the tank car out of the river and haul it away. A local towing company worked with the local fire department, Greater Lynchburg Environmental Network, James River Association, Army Corps of Engineers and local city staff to solve this problem. News coverage was very positive.

This is an example of using rapid response, collaboration, shared decision making, collaborative

problem solving, local business involvement, brining stakeholders together, and getting DEQ positive publicity.

Tidewater

- Concerned citizens and local officials notified DEQ about diesel spills and old railroad ties and debris at a CSX **abandoned railroad site**. DEQ responded quickly to address the concerns and clean up the site. More than 700 tons of materials were sent to the landfill.

This is an example of a rapid response and collaborative effort.

Valley

- VRO formed the **Shenandoah River Fish Kill Task Force** with the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The task force included watershed stakeholders such as anglers, property owners, civic and non-profit groups, conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies working together to address significant outbreaks of dead and ailing fish on South Fork

This is an example of a rapid response to a situation with unknown cause, agency and community collaboration, generating research together and keeping the public informed.

Piedmont

- PRO staff quickly responded to numerous complaints about an unusually **heavy foam** material blanketing the **James River** for several weeks. After numerous investigations and analyses the foam eventually disappeared without a source being identified. Several newspaper articles educated the public about the nature of the foam and kept everyone informed about the progress of the investigation.

This is an example of rapid response to a situation of concern to the general public, and keeping citizens educated and informed about the problem.

- PRO staff responded to a major **fuel pipeline rupture** in a densely populated residential area. Besides attending several public meetings to keep people informed about cleanup progress and to answer questions, the staff stayed on site almost continuously during the cleanup so that residents could get someone to respond to their problems quickly.

This is an example of being responsive and empathetic to citizens' needs during an emergency situation that had significant environmental and public health effects.

Providing citizen input opportunities

All regions have reported holding pre-permit community meetings to allow the public to ask questions in an informal session before the formal hearings. Many regions have made this a mandatory step on the permitting process and are including question and answer sessions prior to permit hearings as the way of doing DEQ agency business.

Central Office

- The central office water permitting group conducted nine **meetings** throughout the state with **agricultural stakeholders** on nutrient trading. Comments were incorporated into the regulation development process.

This is an example of providing opportunity for input, meeting stakeholders where they are in a comfortable setting with others in the same profession, active listening, and engaging citizens early.

Northern Virginia

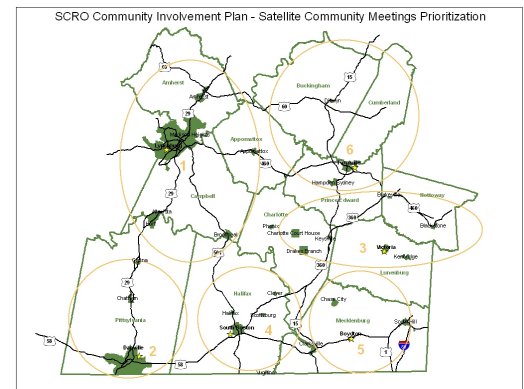
- NVRO developed **customer feedback surveys** for citizens to complete after interacting with DEQ. These surveys were used to improve the permitting process and strengthen DEQ staff's public interaction skills.

This is an example of using citizen written input and evaluating agency services.

South Central

- The SCRO outreach and community involvement committee organized **satellite meetings** to provide a forum for community issues. Staff traveled to libraries, schools and even a museum in Victoria, South Boston, Boyton, Farmville, and Danville to host listening sessions throughout the region. At the meeting in Victoria, Luckstone Enterprises shared their environmental excellence program and their environmental management system.

This is an example of going out to the stakeholders, providing opportunity for input, sharing business EMS with community, and bringing stakeholders together.



Piedmont

- In response to numerous complaints about odors from a permitted industrial facility, PRO staff conducted a **public hearing** so that affected residents could make the company aware of their concerns and the company could respond by explaining their plans for improving the situation.

This is an example of providing an opportunity for citizens to air their grievances about a local problem while providing a forum for an open discussion with the offending facility.

Valley

- VRO staff, in collaboration with VDH, presented a discussion to a **working session** of the Fluvanna County Board of Supervisors. Regional office staff and VDH discussed the permitting of facilities discharging treated wastewater versus on-site treatment, respectively. Other topics discussed included the role of public involvement and local government consent to permitting activities as well as the principal goal of the discharge permitting process in protecting state waters. Additionally, VDH presented some pros and cons of centralized versus decentralized systems.

This is an example of going out to the stakeholders, meeting stakeholders where they are in a comfortable setting, providing opportunity for input, active listening, and engaging citizens early.

Targeting and considering the audience

Northern Virginia

- NVRO with central office Small Business Assistance staff presented a new program to reduce the pollution from **auto body finishing** operations. **Workshops** were held on six **evenings** in a convenient location, with 70 body shop employees and owners attending.

This is an example of providing comprehensive coverage of information, a convenient time and place,

and focused theme; and focusing on a needs-based effort that clarified DEQ responsibilities and raised the visibility of the agency.

South Central

- SCRO staff hosted two **exhibits at a local baseball game**. The youth display included an aquarium with benthic macro invertebrates from a local stream. Staff helped youngsters to examine and identify the bugs. The adult display covered DEQ programs in air, water and waste. One baseball fan visited the booth and asked about the picture of cows in the stream, wondering why this was a problem. She was helping her father with a large herd of beef cattle, and they had always used their stream frontage for watering the animals. After a DEQ staff member explained how that practice impacted water quality, she promised to go back and get fencing built and put an alternative watering strategy in place.



This is an example of going where the public will be, talking about scientific information in lay language, connecting the relationship between behavior and environmental impacts, hands on activities for youth, informational displays and clarifying DEQ responsibilities.

Tidewater

- TRO staff sponsored **training for fire inspectors** on the Virginia Tank Program.

This is an example of how to reach a target audience, bring stakeholders together and clarify DEQ responsibilities.

Valley

- VRO staff held two **evening community meetings** at a central location, Red Hill School, where working residents could come and learn about petroleum contamination of their water supply and the remediation efforts underway

This is an example of meeting with community at a time and place convenient for them (going where the stakeholders are and not expecting them to come to the agency).

West Central

- WCRO staff presented a **workshop** update on solid waste and petroleum storage tanks for **local government officials** focusing on waste management issues associated with construction and demolition activities.

This is an example of tightly targeting your audience, involving local officials and clarifying DEQ responsibilities.

- WCRO and the Army Corps of Engineers co-sponsored a **workshop for homebuilders associations** on the Virginia Water Protection Permit Program in a major effort to reach developers with this information.

This is an example of reaching your targeted audience, responding to local needs, clarifying DEQ responsibilities and collaborating.

Piedmont

- PRO staff members have participated in several **school functions** to help educate and motivate students to appreciate and actively participate in the protection of their natural environment.

This is an example of targeting young people to increase their environmental education and using lay language and concepts to be sure that the message is understood and entertaining.

- PRO staff made **special presentations to members** of the International Steel Tank Institute, Steel Plate Manufacturers and the Virginia Asphalt Associations to make them aware of case studies and to answer their questions about regulations and issues of interest.

This is an example of targeting certain trade organizations that are affected by DEQ programs and keeping them informed about issues of mutual concern.

Program and participant recognition

Central Office

- The Annual Environmental Stewardship **Awards** were presented by the Secretary of Natural Resources and **co-sponsored** by the Virginia Petroleum Council.

This is an example of partnering, getting financial support from business and industry and recognizing participants.

Piggybacking on other meetings, events and conferences

Northern Virginia

- NVRO staff participated in the **Soil and Water Conservation District's** Neighborhood Ecological Stewardship Training program to explain DEQ's educational and regulatory work.

This is an example of piggybacking on other group meetings, clarifying DEQ responsibilities and using lay language.

Piedmont

- PRO staff collaborated with the **Central Virginia Fire and Arson Association** to host training for fire marshals and association members. The training covered underground and above ground petroleum storage tank compliance and emergency responses for petroleum cleanups.

This is an example of piggybacking on other meetings, narrowly targeting your audience and clarifying DEQ's responsibilities.

- PRO staff participated in the "River Days" workshop sponsored by the **Rivanna Conservation Society** by helping students examine water chemistry and biology at a camp in Goochland County.

This is an example of piggybacking on other group meetings to help educate children about the environment using lay language.

South Central

- SCRO staff presented a program on the environmental effects of pesticides to the **Southside Grounds Maintenance** Conference where more than 100 participants were recertifying as commercial pesticide applicators. Staff explained the linkage with water quality and demonstrated testing methods such as fish tissue analysis and sediment sampling techniques.

This is an example of piggybacking on other conferences and meetings, going out to the stakeholders, collaborating with other agencies and organizations, and explaining DEQ responsibilities.

Southwest

- SWRO sponsored a panel discussion on water quality issues, regulations, permitting and enforcement with **Appalachian School of Law**.

This is an example of piggybacking on other events, involving local resources and expertise, and targeting a topic and audience.

Valley

- VRO staff participated in a safety conference sponsored by the **Blue Ridge Safety Association** to promote workplace safety for environmental, safety and health professionals.

This is an example of piggybacking on other meetings, going out to stakeholders and targeting your audience.

Leadership in special community events – Earth Day

Central Office

- The Virginia Office of Environmental Education and Virginia Naturally sponsored an **Earth Day** Celebration **in collaboration with** Environmental Solutions, Inc., the Central Virginia Waste Management Authority and the Keep Henrico Beautiful organization.

This is a good way to collaborate with business and industry.

South Central

- SCRO collaborated **with Fort Pickett** to hold “Army Earth Day” with macro invertebrates from a local stream.

This is an example of using hands-on activities to explain DEQ’s roles and responsibilities.

Tidewater

- TRO staff **sponsored a booth at the Virginia Zoo** in a Norfolk celebration entitled “Party for the Planet.” Conservation was encouraged with hands-on demonstrations using a wetlands diorama, landfill model, interactive underground storage tank display



and a litter pizza.

This is an example of collaboration and using an informational booth and hands on activities and visual aids created by staff.

- TRO staff **sponsored an Earth Day Celebration at Mount Trashmore Park** with a coastal focus. The relationship between landfills and wetlands were explored. *Omar the Oyster* and *Seacil the Seahorse* costumes worn by staff brought great joy to all the children.

This is an example of using a specific theme and appropriate costumes as teaching tools.

West Central

- WCRO staff collaborated **with the Blue Ridge Environmental Network** to sponsor an Earth Day celebration. Information and handouts on DEQ activities and regulatory responsibilities were provided as staff answered questions from participants.

This is a good use of clarifying DEQ's responsibilities and giving the public an opportunity to participate.

Piedmont

- PRO staff participated in a local Earth Day event put on **by Capital One** for the benefit of their employees. Participants were educated about DEQ's environmental protection programs and how to participate as a citizen.

This is an example of taking advantage of a nationally recognized event to educate people about how to participate in improving the environment.

Anticipating and handling conflict

Northern Virginia

- NVRO staff developed a relationship with **Lake Anna** citizen groups and conducted several community informational meetings with Dominion Power representatives about **water quality issues and permits**. An agreement was reached to allow civic association representatives to accompany Dominion staff as they conducted water tests. They also agreed to post all data to a publicly accessible website.

This is an example of how to address conflict; handling disagreements by bringing parties at interest together and convening a participatory process; neutral facilitation; going out to stakeholders; and collaborative problem identification and solving.

Piedmont

CASE STUDY

A PRO landfill permit amendment got lots of public attention with 120 people at a community meeting. Staff used this opportunity to include an **odor control** plan as a permit condition. As a result of this open discussion with the community, only five people had a need to attend the public hearing, which lightened the workload on staff in responding to each item in writing. A landfill advisory group was also established for local leaders to keep in touch with DEQ and landfill operators.

This is an example of how a pre-hearing community meeting to listen to concerns resulted in saving staff

time and effort and was a good use of participatory problem identification, incorporating citizen concerns into permit conditions, and involving citizens in advisory capacity.

South Central

CASE STUDY

SCRO and VDH organized a watershed café type meeting on improving water quality in the **Staunton River**, which is contaminated with PCBs in some sections, meeting that had potential for great conflict. Staff used colorful real estate signs at river bridges and along stream segments to announce the meeting. Wording was very simple and understandable. More than 75 people attended the public meeting. Six tables were set up separately for topic presentations and discussions. Every 15 minutes, participants were given the opportunity to rotate to another table and discuss another topic with VDH and DEQ staff.

This is an example of how anticipating needs and organizing the meeting appropriately can reduce conflict among stakeholders. This was also a good example of how meeting announcements made in paper, television, radio and real estate signs on roadways, collaboration with VDH resulted in a good turnout and how staff tried presentation methods in small groups that allowed participants to be self-directed learners.

Tidewater

- TRO staff collaborated with local government in forming a citizen's advisory board for a proposed **barge off loading** facility at a refuse derived fuel plant. DEQ suggested that the board be formed. Staff provided technical and regulatory responses to citizen questions at meetings of more than 100 people. The board continues to meet regularly and functions well on behalf of the citizens.

This is an example of addressing conflict by involving key leaders as advisors, addressing concerns of citizens, and organizing and providing technical assistance.

Valley

- In response to public opposition to a **proposed discharge permit**, VRO staff arranged a public meeting to provide information to the public and to answer questions. Forty-one citizens and the applicant attended. Based on the input received, VRO staff and the permit applicant worked with the citizens to address their concerns. By the date of the hearing, citizens who initially objected to the discharge were satisfied that the proposed treatment system would be designed to minimize a direct discharge to the stream under normal circumstances, and that on those occasions when it does discharge, it would treat to a high enough standard to minimize environmental and health risks.

This is an example of how a pre-hearing community meeting to listen to concerns resulted in an outcome embraced by both the permit applicant and the community.

- In response to public opposition to the proposed **addition of land application fields** to a Virginia Pollution Abatement permit, VRO staff arranged a public meeting to provide information to the public and to answer questions. A panel composed of staff from DEQ, VDH, and Houff's Feed & Fertilizer Company answered questions raised by the citizens in attendance.

This is an example of using a pre-hearing community meeting to address concerns of citizens and to provide technical information.

West Central

CAST STUDY

WCRO staff sponsored a community meeting in the **Gainesboro neighborhood** to address concerns of a predominantly minority community about the quality of water on **Lick Run**. The meeting was held at the request of local community leaders who felt that the problem had gone unaddressed for too long. City officials attended the meeting at DEQ's request and addressed sewage overflows. Stakeholders developed action items that involved additional help from VDH and the Western Virginia Water Authority. The meeting was held in a place that was comfortable and accessible to all stakeholders, the local library.

This is an example of how to address conflict on an environmental justice topic by bringing the right people to the table— key leaders and city officials, creating the forum for problem discussion and solution, collaborating, and giving simple explanations in lay language.

Office partnerships

West Central/Central

CASE STUDY

WCRO with the central office Waste Division staff organized and facilitated a community meeting to address citizen concerns about the **Bedford Landfill**. DEQ staff listened to citizen concerns about contamination of drinking water wells. DEQ clarified the agency role and responsibilities related to technical aspects of the regulations and corrective actions underway. City representatives promised to provide public water supply to those with contaminated wells. Central office staff used a simple drawing of the ground water model to illustrate what was happening underground. Several newspapers, TV and radio stations covered the story, expecting major conflict during the meeting.

This is an example of anticipating and handling conflict in a meeting by using participatory agenda building to meet needs of stakeholders, simple illustrations and lay language, and active listening through hearing the community concerns; dealing with the media, collaborative problem solving, and low income and minority community issues; involving local officials; and bringing stakeholders together in a pre-permit session. The community believes the issue is taken seriously when the regional director attends and chairs the meeting.

- WCRO and central office staff organized a meeting between concerned citizens and local officials about a **closed county landfill in an environmental justice community**. Staff presented an informational slide show using lay language and illustrations. A facilitated discussion followed where local residents got to meet their local elected representative and ask him directly for his assistance in more closely supervising the landfill site that was now a waste transfer station.

This is an example of how bringing people together, providing structure for communication among stakeholders, presenting info in lay language, and being aware of environmental justice concerns can lead to success.

Clarifying roles and responsibilities

South Central

- SCRO collaboratively wrote and executed a **Memorandum of Understanding** between DEQ and the **Dan River Basin Association** to solidify roles and responsibilities. The regional office will work collaboratively with the association to clean up the impaired waters in the Dan River and its tributaries. The agency and the community will work together on monitoring and water quality improvement efforts. A celebratory signing was included in a community event.

This is an example of collaborating, having clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations; good public relations; bringing stakeholders together; having a shared vision and taking action together.

Section 2: Elements of community involvement

Best community involvement practices

- Effective meeting management and providing structure for effective communication
- Communication and active listening
- Effective presentation and speaking
- Transparency, honesty, openness
- Using lay language to explain technical concepts — clear and open communication
- Continuous evaluation of efforts
- Celebration of accomplishments
- Shared vision
- Participatory problem and issue identification
- Following an open decision process
- Developing alternative action strategies
- Prioritizing actions and setting goals
- Advance planning
- Stakeholder identification
- Relationship building
- Holding meetings in convenient locations and at good times for stakeholders
- Bringing people together – innovative meeting announcements and phone call reminders
- Getting the word out/using stakeholder data bases
- Political context
- Capitalizing on local resources like universities and businesses, facilities, local expertise
- Using multiple methods of presentation to reach different learning styles
- Piggybacking on other meetings and conferences
- Collaborating to get work done on common goals
- Neutral facilitation
- Clear, open and fair decision making process
- Helping stakeholders to become effectively involved at the appropriate times and stages
- Cleanups – helping coordinate action projects
- Involving key local leaders
- Addressing concerns of environmental justice communities and including low income and minorities in the process
- Anticipating and dealing with conflict-using alternative dispute resolution strategies and dealing with diverse audiences and diverging opinions respectfully
- Timely agency response/Responding rapidly to community concerns
- Clarifying DEQ agency role and responsibilities and authority – promote public understanding
- Referring issues to the appropriate decision makers

Five levels of International Association for Public Participation spectrum of involvement

- Inform – give information
- Consult – listen to concerns
- Involve – work together on own goals
- Collaborate – work together as equals on common goals
- Empower (complete delegation)

7 Cs of DEQ

- Certainty
- Collaboration
- Consistency
- Closure
- Commitment
- Communication
- Customer service

DEQ Community Involvement Policy

- Provide opportunities for meaningful involvement.
- Identify and involve stakeholders early and often in the process.
- Use a variety of involvement and presentation techniques.
- Ensure that decision making is open and accessible.
- Develop innovative ways to present information on a website and uses of technology.
- Agency information is clear, understandable, useful, easy to find, accurate, timely, and accessible.